



December 2021 Gabr Fellows meeting in Cairo with the Chairman Shafik Gabr

## ARTEASE

It was a warm day in Cairo. It was a Friday. I was sitting and going through some pressing paperwork when the phone rang and a friend from New York said, breathlessly, "Are you watching?" My response was a simple and calm "What are you talking about?"

Lucy urged me to go online and watch the auction on the unbelievable collection of a New York family. She said the prices were staggering, and the works were confusing.

I asked what was confusing about the works, as I ramped up my laptop. Lucy responded by saying that a white canvas was sold for over ten million dollars... a small weird bronze for over fifty million dollars...

As she was continuing to express her surprise and shock, my screen lit up to see the auctioneer with a smile of the Cheshire cat, as he waved left and right with more agility than a belly dancer with his hands dancing in the air. "It's against you," he was saying. "Will you try USD 18M? Thank you," he said as someone said yes on the phone, then swung his neck like a cobra and looked across the seated audience towards the other side and said: "Give me five." In less than two minutes he sold the painting for twenty million dollars. The cost to the buyer would be more after adding the auction house's commission.

As I was watching, Lucy blurted: "See, this next item? It's another blank canvas." I said: "Not exactly, it has pin-like coloured dots." Lucy, bewildered, said she did not know what that meant. She added that the lot is currently at USD 6M and there are a lot of bids. Soon, the bidding was at USD 7M and the auctioneer was smiling and fiddling with the hammer.

Referring to the next item, Lucy said: "It is a spilled can of paint, and the bid is USD 21M... how can that be?"

I quietly responded: "Dear Lucy, this is not art in the common sense but a valuation of an item, a painted sculpture."

The screen was showing a lot of jostling on the phones, as staff from the auction house representing buyers with their hands over their mouths were either staring silently, raising their hands bidding or flat hand across the neck, announcing that they are withdrawing. It was a surreal dance, led by the auctioneer pouncing left and right with hands swishing in the air as money bids were thrown at him.

As Lucy in New York and myself in Cairo watched the auction, the total hammer had reached over USD 200 million. What was astonishing was a 7-inch sculpture replicating an ice cream cone that sold for USD 11 million.

As I searched the audience, I could see blank eyes and open mouths but as the camera panned, the smiles of the unmasked staff were quite evident. The auctioneer, bending forward, moving to the left and then swinging to the right, was on fire as

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he kept banging his gavel down as bids broke estimates. Finally, the auctioneer thanked everyone and announced the end of this historic sale that netted close to half a billion dollars.

I asked: “Lucy, are you still there?” Her answer was: “Shafik, explain.”

I told her there was nothing to explain – it is a combination of various factors including, but not limited to, the fact that there is a lot of cheap money, an enormous appetite to own what are considered icons, amazing marketing, social media build up and interest in savouring a well-known name, plus the supply and demand equation.

As Lucy acquiesced to the ongoing reality – not necessarily agreeing with it – I reminded her that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and the value is created by the market. “Otherwise”, I added, “how can you explain that a few balloons that resemble an animal can be sold for tens of millions of dollars?”

After the call ended, I remembered years ago I was invited to the home of a wealthy and extremely hospitable couple in Manhattan. I met a very well-known art historian and as the hosts allowed their guests to tour the house and their collection freely. I stood in a beautiful room with walls full of paintings. I was dumbfounded by a painting of a single dot, another one with three horizontal layers of colour, a third with a lot of swishes in black and, finally, a wooden panel depicting a fish. The art historian could see my ignorance ooze out of my eyes.

He approached me and said: “Don’t worry. The art in this room today is worth two hundred million dollars. That is today. But in terms of art, it is rubbish, and in ten years it will be forgotten.” I took comfort in his remarks, but I could not get rid of the feeling that the art world reflects the world we live in today.

**Shafik Gabr**

## FELLOWS NEWS & UPDATES

### AMR SEDA



2017 Gabr Fellow Amr has been appointed as the Strategic Transformation Lead at the British University in Egypt as part of the university president’s cabinet. He is responsible for planning and executing strategic projects that support the university’s transformation into leading the British Higher Education in the region.

Amr has also been appointed as the Head of the World Youth Forum Labs (the startup section of the forum). The World Youth Forum is one of the biggest youth events in the world that is held annually in Sharm El Sheikh under the auspices of HE President Al Sisi.

# SHADY EL-SHERIF

2018 Gabr Fellow Shady and his team at 'Information & Decision Support Center' have recently been nominated in Al-Dostour Newspaper's as the Best Governmental Website in 2021!



## CASEY SMITH / ALEXIS TAYLOR

During the Gabr Fellowship programme, 2015/2016 Gabr Fellows Casey and Alexis created a programme called ATX + EGY. It has continued all this time, even after Alexis and Casey changed jobs. During December they had Egyptian fashion designers in Austin joining for a pop-up retail shop as they work towards entering the US market. And in February, between 16-26th Austin fashion designers will have the same experience but for the purpose of expanding their businesses into Egypt.

To learn more, go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=OGkf8e9xX70>

# MARAM OSAMA

2018 Gabr Fellow Maram, has successfully finished her Master of Public Health at Imperial College, London. She is currently seeking to publish her research which explores how Egyptian psychiatrists use social media to connect with their patients and correct misinformation about mental health and psychiatry online.





# Gabr Fellows Meeting

## 18th December 2021



On 18 December 2021, Egyptian Gabr Fellows were invited by the Chairman of the Shafik Gabr Foundation to meet in Cairo at ARTOC Headquarters.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Fellows shared their latest achievements academically and business-wise, and openly discussed their plans for the future. The group heard from 2016 Gabr Fellow Yasser El Zahhar, who proposed a startup which caught everyone's attention.

2017 Gabr Fellow Sarah Badr, who has been chosen as official spokesperson of the Global Youth Forum, talked about this iconic event taking place in Sharm El-Sheikh in January 2022.

The group then discussed the Fellows' proposed reunion in Luxor in February. The program was discussed in general terms and the Fellows were encouraged to come up with themes and to propose speakers.

2016 Gabr Fellow Mohammed El Attar spoke about his plan to establish a base in Dubai and to expand his hospitality business. Moreover, the Fellows discussed 2017 Gabr Fellow Dalia Younis's event in New York, where she is to sing Arabic Christmas Carols. This was arranged by Mr Kevin O'Callaghan, President of UBS in New York, and Chairman Gabr, to support all interfaith and intercultural efforts.

The meeting ended with a general discussion about the latest developments in US-Egypt bilateral relations, and a quick-fire-round exercise on focus and imperatives related to power and society.

# The Fraying of U.S.-China Relations

By Isaac Chotiner  
November 20th 2021

During the past several years, the U.S.-China relationship has reached its lowest point in decades. This week, after a virtual summit with Xi Jinping that lasted more than three hours, President Biden referred to “commonsense guardrails” that were needed to keep the relationship from spiralling further downward. But the summit did not end with any concrete agreements—or even a joint statement—on the issues affecting the relationship, which run from trade and technological development to human rights in Hong Kong and Xinjiang to the future of Taiwan. The lack of agreement underscored the reality that the problems between the two countries appear largely intractable, despite an urgent need for coöperation on issues such as climate change.

I recently spoke by phone with Jude Blanchette, the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in Washington, D.C., about his view of the summit. During our conversation, which has been edited for length and clarity, we discussed whether to think about the Chinese-American relationship as zero-sum, Xi Jinping’s refusal to leave China during the past twenty-one months, and why a conflict over Taiwan may be less imminent than many in Washington fear.

**What was your biggest takeaway from this virtual meeting?**

The fact that the expectations of the meeting were simply that they have the meeting shows how far the relationship has deteriorated over a relatively short period of time. And so, while undoubtedly it’s important that we are now seeing the senior-most-level dialogue, when we think about whether this marks an inflection point as the end of the cold war, the low expectations both sides were setting were actually a sign that the fault lines are quite deep and extensive, and that this is going to be a very long process of finding very limited areas of coöperation amid a deep sea of tensions in key areas of rivalry. So it marks in a more profound way that we are now deeply into—or officially into—an entirely new era of U.S.-China relations.

**How would you characterize the era? You just used the phrase “cold war,” even if it doesn’t seem quite like the U.S.-Soviet relationship between 1945 and 1991.**

We probably don’t want to spend the whole time talking about Cold War analogies, but I would just say that no historical analogy is perfect, and, like Churchill said of democracy, the Cold War is the worst possible historical analogy except for all the others. It’s not exactly a replay of Soviet-U.S. competition. But it is a multidimensional competition bordering on rivalry between two great powers that is likely to endure for some time, so the broad outlines of “cold war” at least help us begin thinking about some of the things we need to do to manage the relationship. My fear is that, by fighting off Cold War analogies, we are just leaving ourselves in more inchoate and vague territory, and what that leads to is issues like Taiwan continuing to spiral out of control without adopting some Cold War thinking about how to put in crisis-management mechanisms and confidence-building measures. It’s a muscle we haven’t flexed in some time. That’s the limited appeal of the analogy.

**What are those measures to prevent things from spiralling out of control? It appeared that the American side seemed to be saying that, even though we have all these issues, this isn’t a zero-sum game. Do you see it that way?**

I think actually that one of the outcomes of the meeting—making sure that Xi Jinping is as in person as we are going to get him for the time being—is to now begin to strap the direction of the relationship to his own personage. What had happened before is that he was relatively aloof. And that meant you had this “wolf warrior” army underneath him, and it felt like the relationship was spiralling without him putting his own name and legacy on the line. I think one of the smart moves about getting him to the table is he has a vested interest in managing this because it is strapped to his back.

I think it’s true that it is not zero-sum, but there are areas of both zero-sum and positive-sum. And one of the challenges we have is that we speak of it as “a competition,” but really it is multiple competitions. We are going to see areas, like in green technology, where we are vying against each other, but it could actually yield very positive benefits for both sides, because the pie may not get bigger, but it gets greener and better for everybody...

CLICK HERE



to read more

**Disclaimer: The views presented in this article are the author’s alone and do not represent the opinion of the Foundation.**

# 2017 Gabr Fellow Dalia Younis performs at St Patricks Cathedral, New York



<https://www.daliayounis.com/>



On 22nd December, 2021, for the first time in the history of New York's St Patrick's Cathedral, a Muslim, veiled Egyptian woman, sang Christmas Carols – in Arabic.

This Egyptian was 2017 Gabr Fellow Dalia Ihab Younis, a medical doctor by training, a content creator and strategist in the development sector by profession, but by passion she is an independent musical artist and mezzo-soprano.

Dalia presented a special programme of Arabic versions of the most popular Christmas carols, where the audience of the ancient cathedral listened to familiar classical tunes in an unfamiliar language. This came as part of 'Sacred Music', one of Dalia's artistic projects for interfaith dialogue and bridge-building through art.

Dalia was accompanied by a group of volunteer musicians, most notably the international artist Kamel Boutros on piano and Mohamed Neem on percussion, both of whom are New Yorkers and of Egyptian origin.

During Dalia's presentation, those in attendance included the President of Dassault, Ambassadors, University Presidents and many more. Dalia's performance received overwhelmingly positive feedback, including: "Amazing Christmas songs, wonderful voice, beautiful singer and great musician making this Christmas so perfect and glorious."

Dalia's memorable performance at St Patrick's Cathedral was arranged by Mr Kevin O'Callaghan, President of UBS in New York, and The Shafik Gabr Foundation, to support all interfaith and intercultural efforts. Since 2017, Dalia is a proud member of the Gabr Fellowship family and its 'East-West Art of Dialogue' initiative.

CLICK HERE

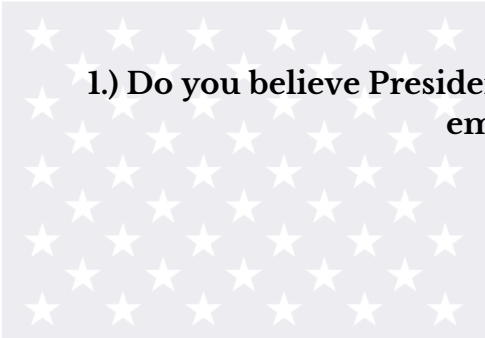


to watch Dalias performance.



# QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH: A PULSE OF THE GABR FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY

As the Gabr Fellows enter into leadership roles—in business, diplomacy, government, finance, and more— they will continue to grapple with significant challenges, magnified by an increased pace in technological advancement, the potential for ramped up global inequalities, and changes in governance and economic structures. To better understand the pulse of the Gabr Fellowship community and to begin to articulate substantive dialogue, the Foundation polls the Fellows each month on the key issues facing their respective countries and the global community at large.



**1.) Do you believe President El-Sisi was correct in lifting the state of emergency in Egypt?**

Yes - **66%**  
No - **0%**  
Unsure - **34%**

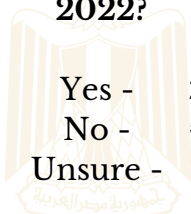
**2.) Do you believe President Biden was correct in his withdrawal from Afghanistan?**

Yes - **50%**  
No - **34%**  
Unsure - **16%**

**3.) Do you believe the Ethiopian - Egyptian conflict on the Dam will be resolved peacefully in 2022?**

Yes - **22%**  
No - **41%**  
Unsure - **37%**

**4.) Do you believe the US - China bilateral relations will improve in 2022?**



Yes - **28%**  
No - **53%**  
Unsure - **19%**

**5.) Is inflation a threat in your economy?**

Yes - **66%**  
No - **31%**  
Unsure - **3%**

Stay tuned for next month's 'questions of the month' and the Gabr Fellows' takes on current events, as our community of future leaders consider the most pressing challenges of today and tomorrow.

# ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

Launched in 2012, the Gabr Fellowship programme helps to connect and build constructive relationships between future leaders between the ages of 24 and 35. Each year, the Fellowship consists of 20-24 Fellows, half of which are men and the other half women, with an equal distribution between participants from the United States and Egypt. The Fellowship also accepts applicants from Jordan, Lebanon, France and the United Kingdom. Fellows represent a variety of sectors, including the arts, law, finance, tech, non-profits, and entrepreneurship – both business and social.

The mission of the Fellowship is to promote greater mutual understanding by building bridges between the two cultures by instigating dialogue and the exchange of ideas between emerging leaders from the United States and Egypt. Together, they explore one another's cultures, political realities, business trends and their goals for the future.



**2018 Gabr Fellows visit World Bank, Washington**

Ultimately, through hands-on activities, rigorous discussions, cultural site visits, and the collaborative action projects, the Fellows have a greater understanding of both countries and become part of an international cohort dedicated to building a more equitable and peaceful world.

The Gabr Fellows have acquired a greater understanding of both Egypt and the United States and the challenges faced by both communities. Having served as cultural as well as linguistic ambassadors to one another, they then return home to play the role of diplomat, introducing Egyptians and Americans to a people, a culture and a future never before explored in this way.

Together, they are creating the legacy of 'The Gabr Fellowship': an international cohort dedicated to pursuing cooperative, collective solutions to their regions' most pressing issues.



**Gabr Fellows with Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister Sameh Shoukry**



**Gabr Fellows take on the Pyramids**



# SUPPORT THE FOUNDATION

The Shafik Gabr Foundation invites you to invest in the future and partner with the Foundation using one of more of the following means:

**Sponsor a Fellow** - Individuals have the opportunity to nominate a Fellow and if selected, sponsor their participation in the Gabr Fellowship. Sponsors will be recognised in all Foundation publications, marketing materials, and at all events.

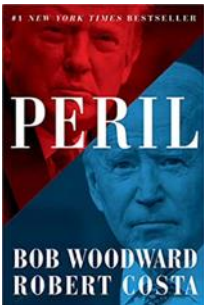
**Corporate patron** - Corporations can nominate Fellows for participation in the Fellowship and sponsor their participation on a company-wide level. The company will be listed in all publications, the logo will be presented on the Foundation's homepage and be given visibility at all events in the United States and Egypt.

**Unrestricted support** - A general operating grant can empower the Foundation to continue to invest in innovative platforms to facilitate ongoing dialogue between the East and West. From new technologies to expanding the programme to more countries and a greater number of participants, the Fellowship can create a broader multiregional impact.

To support the Foundation, please visit <https://www.eastwestdialogue.org/fellowship/how-to-support/>

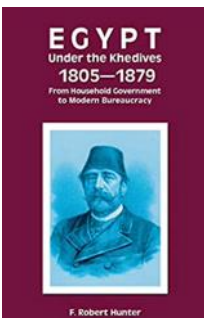
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## Gabr Foundation Reading Corner



The Foundation Reading Corner encourages Fellows to critique the books that have been recommended to them in each issue. For this issue, Mr. Gabr recommends *Peril* by Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, and *Egypt Under the Khedives, 1805-1879: From Household Government to Modern Bureaucracy* by F. Robert Hunter.

*Peril* is the extraordinary story of the end of one presidency and the beginning of another. The culmination of Bob Woodward's bestselling trilogy on the Trump presidency is an essential read for anyone wanting to understand this tumultuous period.



Robert Hunter's *Egypt Under the Khedives* was a pioneering work when first published in the 1980s, as Western scholars began to comb Egypt's national archives for an understanding of the social and economic history of the country. It is now recognized as one of the fundamental books on nineteenth-century Egypt: it is archivally based and empirically solid.

# HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO OUR JANUARY FELLOWS!



2017 Fellow - Sherif Soliman  
January 1st



2014 Fellow - Shehab Kamel  
January 1st



2015 Fellow - Bassma Fahim  
January 11th



2013 Fellow - Reem Soliman  
January 12th



2013 Fellow - Daniel Lansberg-Rodriguez  
January 14th



2013 Fellow - Mohammed Mubarak  
January 26th



2017 Fellow - Bryan Griffin  
January 27th



2018 Fellow - Katie Applebaum  
January 27th



2016 Fellow - Alexis Taylor  
January 29th

January

# THE GABR FELLOWSHIP

*Monthly Newsletter*



The  
SHAFIK GABR  
Foundation

For more information on the Shafik Gabr Foundation and its East-West: The Art of Dialogue Initiative, please visit the website <https://eastwestdialogue.org/>.

For earlier itineraries of the program, please see the previous years' reports at <https://eastwestdialogue.org/fellowship/brochures/>



Ludwig Deutsch – *The Smoker* - Oil on Panel  
The Shafik Gabr Collection

## Connect with us!



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